

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY  
MARCH 17, 2020**

**ITEM 3**

**SUBJECT**

CONSIDERATION OF A PROPOSED RESOLUTION ON THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR GENERAL WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL COMPOSTING OPERATIONS AND ASSOCIATED GENERAL ORDER

**DISCUSSION**

On August 4, 2015, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted General Waste Discharge Requirements for Composting Operations, Order [WQ 2015-0121-DWQ](#) (Composting General Order). The Composting General Order has requirements for composting operations to manage wastewater, and includes specifications for setbacks from surface water, depth to groundwater, allowable feedstocks, drainage, working surfaces, and detention ponds.

At the September 19, 2017 Board meeting, staff presented an informational item on the Implementation of the Composting General Order, providing information about performance measures, enrollment, and compliance. At that meeting, stakeholders expressed concerns regarding limitations of the agricultural exemption for on-farm composting and requirements for composting manure. Additionally, stakeholders suggested that dairies should compost manure as a best management practice. However, there appear to be more stringent requirements for manure in the Composting General Order than in the Central Valley Water Board's Dairy General Order. Stakeholders indicated that this serves as a disincentive to compost. Because dairies that are enrolled in a regional board order already have requirements for manure handling areas, there is confusion between the two sets of requirements. To address these concerns, the State Water Board directed staff to investigate these issues and evaluate if the current requirements are appropriate. At the March 18, 2018 Board Meeting, staff presented potential options to address stakeholder concerns. Staff are presenting proposed revisions to the Composting General Order to encourage agricultural composting while maintaining a level playing field with commercial composting operations and protecting water quality.

**POLICY ISSUE**

This item proposes revisions to the Composting General Order to allow manure in Tier 1 if a groundwater monitoring protection program is implemented and expand the agricultural exemption to include shared feedstocks between agricultural operations.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

**REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT**

Yes. All regions are implementing Order WQ 2015-0121-DWQ. The regions would transition to using the revised Composting General Order.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends adopting the Resolution to certify the California Environmental Quality Act Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and adopting the General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Composting Operations as revised.